

Rev. Dr. Edward W. Verner

1919-2007

Dr. Verner was born in Waycross, Georgia on April 12, 1919 to Estelle Jenkins Verner and Dr. Edward Walter Verner Sr. Due to systemic injustices and insults he endured in the state of his birth, Dr. Verner vowed early on that he would raise his family in those areas of the country where there was hope that he and his children would receive a fair chance. Dr. Verner endured what many of his race had to endure in the southern parts of the United States and he knew the pain of prejudice but rose above it all to live a life well lived (par excellence) - not allowing the hardship and ugliness of his early experiences of racial hatred retard his success.

Dr. Verner's mother died in childbirth. God did take care of this motherless child in the form of Mamie (Momma) White, the woman who raised him. The Holy Spirit surrounded Edward and wrapped His arms around him all the days of his life. Momma White, who was an illiterate offspring of a union soldier and newly emancipated slave, completely devoted her life to Edward and gave him the best possible foundation that prepared him for the exemplary life that was his. Dr. Verner came from a strong religious background that included his maternal grandfather who was a bishop in the CME church. As a teenager, he joined and later became a youth officer at St. Phillip AME church in Savannah, Georgia.

Dr. Verner graduated from Alfred E. Beach High School in Savannah, Georgia with Salutatorian distinction in 1936, and four years later, received the Bachelor of Science degree (Cum Laude) from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. He went on to Meharry Medical College and graduated from there in 1944. He completed his internship and residency at Hubbard Hospital in Nashville, TN. After completing his training, he was selected for a Damon Runyon Cancer Fellowship at Columbia University in New York City. It was there that he studied under the renowned Breast Disease Specialist, Dr. C. D. Haagensen. This exposure kindled Dr. Verner's interest in diseases of the breast.

From 1952-1954, Dr. Verner served as Captain of the USAF Medical Division in California, and received High Commendations when he was discharged.

Early on, Dr. Verner recognized his dual call to medicine and the ministry. Although he chose medicine initially, he found a way to accept the call of ministry as well. He studied at Drew Theological School and for many years took theology courses at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Dr. Verner was ordained in the A.M.E. church and was the Senior Associate Pastor at St. James A.M.E. Church in Newark, New Jersey.

Dr. Verner is founder of two major Ministerial organizations; The Newark North Jersey Committee of Black Clergy and the Black Ministers Council of New Jersey. In founding the organizations, he said, *"The voice of the Black Community is articulated through the Black Church and I dare anyone to try and deny it. There is no significant issue in the Black Community which is not directly interrelated or influenced by the Black Church"*. Dr. Verner was a visionary who believed that the united power of the clergy could have a positive impact on all aspects of life including voter registration, education, employment, housing, and substance abuse. Dr. Verner served as the Executive Director of the United Black Interdenominational Clergy of New Jersey in 1998, and received numerous appointments by New Jersey Governors. He was also the Health Director for New Jersey Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Due to his concern for the poor and uninsured, who often lacked access to medical care, he founded Interfaith Health Services in 1994. This organization provided free health screenings at local churches and community events. He partnered with local hospitals to provide services to those whose screenings indicated medical risk. On warm sunny days, he could be found setting up shop on busy street corners in downtown Newark to offer free blood pressure screenings, educational material, and referrals when needed.

Among his many awards, Dr. Verner received the Annual ECMS DELTA Award for outstanding community service.

Soldier in the army of the Lord, servant to all of mankind, devoted husband, loving and wise father, grandfather, and great grandfather, physician extraordinaire, civic leader, minister of the whole gospel, friend to all, Rev. Edward Walter Verner, M.D. left us in body but will remain with us always in spirit.